

Press statement 22 February 2010 – for immediate release

Patients' voice excluded from investigation!

If you think patients might know about the treatment options that work best for them, a parliamentary committee thinks otherwise. The results of a so called 'evidence check' into the effectiveness of homeopathy have just been released, and they reveal an extraordinarily narrow view of what constitutes 'evidence'. For one thing, no one has bothered to ask patients what their experience of homeopathy has been. **In fact, the patients' voice has been totally excluded from the investigation!** This is strange, because according to the Government White Paper (January 2006) '*Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services*,' 'patient centred healthcare' is supposed to be at the heart of NHS delivery. Or is this a commitment which is upheld, only when it's politically expedient?

Recently, the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (HoC S&TC) were charged to investigate the available evidence in support of the efficacy of homeopathy. Their survey comprised a combination of written submissions and oral presentations. Now you would think that a specially convened committee of this nature, would be keen to access information from every possible source. You might even think that, given the recent parliamentary expenses scandal, a parliamentary special committee would want to conduct its business in an open, transparent and even handed manner, and show that it is using taxpayers' money in a responsible manner. But you would be wrong!

Most of the homeopathy profession were not informed directly that an enquiry was to take place, and only learned of it via the media, with less than ten days to prepare a submission. Is that a serious way to treat an 'evidence check'? The majority of individuals invited to give oral evidence were from the anti homeopathy lobby. Only one practising homeopath was allowed to speak (there are about 2,500 registered homeopaths in the UK), and not a single patient was asked for their view (there are about 6,000,000 patients using homeopathy in the UK). Does this sound as though the oral submissions represented a balanced perspective?

But wait, there's more! It has been said that this 'evidence check' was instigated by Liberal Democrat MP Dr Evan Harris, one of homeopathy's most vociferous detractors. Dr Harris belongs to a self appointed pressure group that calls itself 'Sense About Science' (SAS, get it?!!) If you want to know the particular allegiance of this group, just take a look at who comprises SAS's Board of Trustees, and the industries they represent. Did you know that Dr Harris was one of the fourteen members of the S&T Committee? Shortly after the inquiry closed, Dr Harris took part in a very public demonstration against homeopathy. Is this the correct way for an individual in a privileged and responsible position to behave? Should someone showing such a clear bias from the outset, be allowed to sit on a committee of this nature? One could be forgiven for thinking that our parliamentary process has been hijacked by this influential pressure group, which seems to have succeeded in subverting the S&T Committee into convening a 'kangaroo court' with just one predetermined agenda; to discredit homeopathy.

As Karin Mont, Chair of the Alliance of Registered Homeopaths said; '*Millions of patients in the UK know that homeopathy works for them, yet they are being totally ignored. Also, we see the most amazing results when homeopathy is used on animals, but this Committee seems intent on denying all the supportive evidence with which it has been presented. If their recommendations are acted upon by Government, patients will be denied the choice they have a right to receive within the NHS. In short, if they can't afford to pay for their homeopathic treatment privately, they'll have to go without!*'

It appears that hundreds of positive trials, thousands of hospital reports, a successful mass immunisation programme in Cuba, and a recent pilot project in Northern Ireland, all showing homeopathy to be efficacious and cost efficient, don't count as evidence. In fact the conclusions of the S&T Committee are so one sided, you could ask if they actually read any of the submissions presented to them? The experience of patients obviously doesn't count either, because they weren't even invited to contribute to the enquiry. This is a sad day for our citizens. It makes a mockery of genuine scientific enquiry, it brings the democratic process into disrepute, and it has the potential to deny patients access to a system of medicine which is gentle, safe, effective and cost efficient.

ENDS

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THE ALLIANCE OF REGISTERED HOMEOPATHS INFORMATION FOR EDITORS

The Alliance of Registered Homeopaths (ARH) is a UK professional organisation that supports and promotes a high standard of safe, effective homeopathic practice. It currently represents over 700 practising homeopaths.

We are committed to:

- ensuring that quality homeopathy is available to all who wish to use it
- raising public awareness of the potential of homeopathic treatment
- encouraging a high standard of education for homeopaths
- supporting the ongoing professional development of our Members
- encouraging co-operation between our Members and other healthcare professionals, for the benefit of patients
- engaging in research, publishing and other activities that enhance our understanding of homeopathy
- acting as an information base for the general public.